



# CONSULAR CORNER

ISSUE IV

2012



## Ambassador's Message:

It is with pleasure that I look back on my first three months here in Tbilisi, Georgia. It has been a great privilege to work with my new U.S. and Georgian partners during this exciting time. The upcoming holiday season presents a special opportunity to celebrate our common achievements and share our traditions. It is a time to recognize not only the important relationships we have with our families, friends, and neighbors, but also the great friendship between our two countries. The United States and Georgia commemorated an important milestone this year: 20 years of friendship. This partnership is built on shared values and a commitment to democracy, good governance, and freedom.

As you make plans for the upcoming winter months, I encourage everyone to take advantage of the excellent resources for travelers available through U.S. Embassy Tbilisi. U.S. citizens travelling abroad have the option to enroll in our Smart Traveler Enrollment Plan, through which they can receive important messages and travel warnings. In this edition of the newsletter you will find reminders about the other services available to U.S. citizens and some useful travel tips. In August we announced a new appointment, public inquiry, and passport pick-up service for applicants applying for non-immigrant visas. I am pleased to announce this transition has been smooth and the feedback generally positive. U.S. Embassy Tbilisi was a strong supporter of International Education Week this November and we hope our new visa application procedures will make it easier for Georgians interested in international education in the United States to apply early and well-prepared. It is my hope that these services will help make your travel plans safer and easier, and will facilitate greater exchange and cooperation between our countries. Best wishes from me and my colleagues of the U.S. Embassy for a safe, happy, and healthy holiday season and New Year!

Sincerely,

Ambassador Richard B. Norland



Click here to view [CONSUL'S PODCAST](#) on American Citizen Services

Click here to view [CONSUL'S PODCAST](#) on Diversity Visa Lottery Program



**Emergency Contact: (995 32) 227-7000**

**Includes Crime Victims, Arrest, Death, Child Abduction, Life Threatening Illness or Medical Conditions, Lost/Stolen U.S. Passport, or other safety and welfare issues of a U.S. citizen.**

### Hours of Operation & Contact Information

American citizen services are available by appointment only. To make an appointment for citizen services please visit

<http://georgia.usembassy.gov/service.html>

Address: # 11 George Balanchine str.  
0131 Tbilisi  
Telephone: (995 32) 227-77-24  
After hours emergency number:  
(995 32) 227-70-00

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR U.S. CITIZENS !!!

In case of a crisis and/or natural disaster U.S. citizens in Georgia may tune in to the following FM radio stations for updated U.S. Embassy emergency messages and information for U.S. citizens:

Radio Syndicate — 104.3 FM (Tbilisi and Gori)  
Radio GIPA — 94.3 FM (Tbilisi)  
Radio Atinati — 105.9 FM (Zugdidi)  
Radio Hereti — 102.8 FM (Lagodekhi and Kakheti)  
Radio Dzveli Kalaki — 107.9 FM (Kutaisi)  
Radio Harmonia — 100.5 FM (Poti)

Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs wishes you good cheer this holiday season and safe travel and shares holiday travel tips on <http://travel.state.gov/>

We all know that the holiday season is peak travel time. Although airports will be crowded, that doesn't have to ruin your holiday travel experience. Whether you are packing your bags for the sunny beaches of the Caribbean or headed to the snowy slopes of Switzerland, we hope you will take advantage of the following tips to help make your holiday travels safe, smooth, and stress-free.

**[Take these holiday travel tips with you! Download the Smart Traveler Holiday Travel Checklist.](#)**

## **Holiday Travel Tips**

### **Enroll in STEP**

Record your travel plans with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), a free online service that allows us to better assist you if there is a family emergency in the United States or a crisis where you are traveling. You'll also receive updated travel information for countries you plan to visit. In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare and whereabouts will not be released to others without your express authorization.

### **Apply early for your passport**

Did you know that a U.S. passport book or passport card is now required for land and sea travel to Mexico and the Caribbean? If you do not have a passport and you plan to travel outside of the United States this holiday season, apply for your passport now. Our current commitment for passport processing time is four to six weeks for routine service and two to three weeks for expedited service. There are 26 passport agencies and more than 8,800 passport acceptance facilities across the United States. Passport application forms are available on our website.

### **Once you receive your passport, sign it and fill in the emergency information**

Make sure you have a signed, valid passport, and a visa, if required, and fill in the emergency information page of your passport. Most passports are valid for ten years. Write the contact information in pencil so you can change it as needed over time.

### **Leave copies of itinerary, passport data page, and credit card**

Sure, you've enrolled in STEP so that your family and the State Department can contact you in an emergency, but you should also leave copies of your itinerary, passport data page and visas with family or friends at home. Leave a copy of your credit card too; in an emergency, the credit card company can help your family locate you.

### **Check your overseas medical insurance coverage**

Ask your medical insurance company if your policy applies overseas, and if it covers emergency expenses such as medical evacuation. If it does not, consider supplemental insurance. Medical treatment and evacuations can cost thousands of dollars – some countries won't allow you in through customs unless you can show proof of medical insurance!

### **Familiarize yourself with local conditions and laws**

While in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws. Our website has useful safety and other information about the countries you will visit. You can also download the Smart Traveler iPhone app to have the country information at your fingertips.

### **Find the closest U.S. embassy or consulate**

Take a moment to locate the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate in your destination country. This can come in handy if you need the assistance of a consular officer.

### **Take precautions to avoid being a target of crime**

Practice the same safety tips you would in any unfamiliar place: do not wear clothing or jewelry that would attract attention and do not carry excessive amounts of money; do not leave unattended luggage in public areas; do not accept packages from strangers; and do not travel with anything you'd hate to lose.

### **Contact us in an emergency**

We are here to help you. Consular personnel at U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad and in the United States are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to provide emergency assistance to U.S. citizens. Contact information for U.S. Embassies and Consulates appears on our website, or you can call the Office of Overseas Citizen Services for assistance with emergencies at 1-888-407-4747 (if calling from the U.S. or Canada), or 202-501-4444 (if calling from overseas). Visa inquiries are not addressed after hours, even if the inquiry is made by a U.S. citizen.

## Messages for U.S. Citizens enrolled in Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

The U.S. Department of State divides messages into three categories:

“Message for U.S. Citizens”, “Security Message for U.S. Citizens”, “Emergency Message for U.S. Citizens”

-- "Message for U.S. Citizens" will be the label for routine but important messages such as voting news, outreach information, or newsletters.

-- “Security Message for U.S. Citizens” will be the label for personal security threats of a general or systemic nature, such as crime trends, demonstrations, peaceful actions intended to disrupt normal activity.

-- "Emergency Message for U.S. Citizens" will be the label for breaking news messages containing advice for the resident community, such as those alerting U.S. citizens to demonstrations, a political crisis, a natural disaster, or a terrorist attack.

Messages are posted on our embassy website at <http://georgia.usembassy.gov/>. Notifications for the entire world are also available at the International Travel section of the [http:// travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) website.

## **Note!!!**

Page for “Demonstration Notices”

Demonstration Notices are a special class of message to U.S. citizens that are designed to alert U.S. citizens to a probable demonstration over a fixed period of time at a particular location. This information is conveyed so that you can take appropriate action to provide for your own safety and security.



### **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

Sender's ID for Short Text Messages from the U.S. Embassy Consular section previously titled as “Warden MSG” will now be displayed as “**Embassy MSG**”.

If you have enrolled in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), but have not provided a cell phone number and now wish to begin receiving text messages from the U.S. Embassy Consular section in Tbilisi, please email us at [askconsultbilisi@state.gov](mailto:askconsultbilisi@state.gov)



# Retirement Abroad

*Retirement abroad requires careful planning. Here are some important steps to take or consider for your retirement.*

**Check Residency Requirements:** Immigration and residency laws differ greatly from country to country. Determine if you need a visa to enter and reside in the country where you want to retire by reviewing the Department of State's [Country Specific Information](#). If dual citizenship is an option for you, review our information on [dual nationality](#) before taking this step.

**Know the Local Laws:** Seek professional legal advice before settling abroad. Determine whether your trust, will and powers of attorney may be legally enforceable in your country of destination. In addition to your lawyer in the United States, the U.S. embassy or consulate can provide you with a list of local English-speaking lawyers willing to assist U.S. citizens. Especially in local real estate matters, it is important to understand any contracts you are asked to sign. Review the local traffic laws and licensing requirements if you intend to drive. Some countries have a changeable political environment with more opaque legal systems. Be sure to find out what civil liberties and political rights you will have as a foreign resident.

**Pay Your Taxes:** Leaving the country does not exempt U.S. citizens from their U.S. tax obligations. While some retirees may not owe any U.S. income tax while they are living abroad, you must still file a return annually with the IRS. This is the case even if you move all of your assets to a foreign country; you may still be taxed on income regardless of where it is earned.

Retirees abroad must also fulfill any tax obligations of their foreign country of residence. The United States has tax treaties with a number of countries that address double taxation, but these treaties generally don't exempt residents from the obligation to file a return. Retirees who acquire any assets abroad should also consider the need to modify estate plans, since those assets may be subject to local estate tax rules. Insurance is another factor to consider with assets acquired overseas. Most U.S. umbrella liability policies don't cover international assets. For more information please review the IRS website ([www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)).

**Understand your Social Security Benefits:** Social Security restrictions prohibit sending payments to individuals in certain countries, including Georgia. Generally, you cannot receive payments while you are in Georgia, however exceptions can be made for certain eligible beneficiaries in countries with Social Security restrictions in place.

To qualify for an exception, you must agree to the conditions of payment. One of the conditions is that you must appear in person at the U.S. Embassy each month to receive your benefits. Contact **your nearest U.S. Social Security office or the U.S. Embassy Consular Section** for additional information about these conditions and whether you qualify for an exception. For information please visit: <http://www.ssa.gov/>

# Retirement Abroad

Continued...

**Research Medical Care and Costs:** Healthcare tops the list of concerns for many U.S. citizens who are thinking about moving abroad. Medicare, the U.S. government health plan for people 65 and over, does not cover healthcare overseas. Many countries have national health systems, but it is important to investigate availability and quality beforehand. Note that environmental conditions at your overseas destination may contribute to specific health concerns, particularly if you are sensitive to altitude, air pollution, humidity, or other conditions. Consult with your physician prior to your move overseas to identify your healthcare needs at your retirement destination. We highly recommend that you get health insurance to cover private

medical and dental treatment and for medical evacuation to the United States just in case.

If you want to get more tips related to health issues, please visit the [Travel.State.Gov](http://Travel.State.Gov) website. Health information may also be found at the Travelers' Health page of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) [website](#).

**Beware of Scams:** Retirement funds are an attractive target for scammers who make false promises of romance, friendship, or financial gain. Scammers operate primarily via the internet, email, and phone. For more information, please review our information on [International Financial Scams](#). Information on scams common in your destination country can also be found in each country's [Country Specific Information](#).

**Prepare for Emergencies:** Leave emergency contact information and a copy of your passport biographic data page with family and trusted friends. Carry emergency contact information for your family in the United States with you when you travel (be sure to also pencil it in the emergency contact information section of your passport). Know the contact information for the U.S. embassy or consulate and provide that information to your family and friends. If there is an emergency where you are staying, such as civil unrest, disrupted transportation, or a natural disaster, prevent undue worry or concern by contacting your family and friends as soon as possible.

**Stay Connected:** A secure way to maintain your emergency contact information is to enroll with [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#). Your information is stored securely and enables the Department of State, U.S. embassy, or consulate to contact you, your family, or your friends in an emergency according to your wishes.



## VICTIMS OF CRIME:

If you or someone you know becomes the victim of a crime abroad, you should contact the local police and the [U.S. Embassy Tbilisi Consular section](#).

We can:

- Replace a stolen passport;
- Help you find appropriate medical care if you are the victim of a violent crime such as assault or rape;
- Put you in contact with the appropriate police authorities, and if you want us to, we can contact family members or friends; and,
- Help you understand the local criminal justice process and direct you to local attorneys, although it is important to remember that local authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting the crime.

Recently the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA) has established a 24-hour emergency response center equivalent to “911”. The new emergency-response center services all of Georgia via united emergency number “112,” and transmits received emergency calls to the fire and rescue service, [patrol police](#) and the nearest [medical-emergency center](#).

Please note that the dispatcher speaks Georgian and Russian, but will transfer a call to an English-speaking operator.

Please see [information on victims of crime](#), including possible victim compensation programs in the United States.

View the updated [Country Specific Information on Georgia](#)  
[http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1122.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1122.html)

### **Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center**

The Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center works with abused U.S. citizen women and children in foreign countries to provide domestic violence and child abuse advocacy resources and tools so that they can navigate the complicated jurisdictional legal and social international landscapes to be able to live their lives free of abuse either in the foreign country or back in the United States.

To learn more about this organization please [visit their website here](#).

To contact the  
Consular section during  
business hours call  
(995 32) 227-77-24

Email:  
[AskConsulTbilisi@state.gov](mailto:AskConsulTbilisi@state.gov)

For after-hours  
emergencies  
(995 32) 227-70-00

## Reminder: Appointments Mandatory for Routine ACS Services

All of our American citizen services are available by appointment only. Visitors may receive multiple services during the same visit — please make a separate appointment for each service (e.g., to apply for passports and obtain a notary service, make two appointments). Arrive few minutes before your appointment to allow time to go through security.

ACS appointments must be made using our website:  
<http://georgia.usembassy.gov/service.html>

In case you need an emergency appointment please contact us via phone or email and we will try to accommodate your request at the earliest convenience.

The following services do not need an appointment and may stop by the Consular **any business day** from 2pm to 4 pm:

- ☐ Report an emergency or urgent matter (e.g., death, hospitalization, or arrest of a U.S. citizen)
- ☐ Report a lost or stolen passport
- ☐ Pick up passports, Consular Reports of Birth Abroad (CRBA)
- ☐ Pick up Social Security or tax refund checks



## Leaving Georgia?

If you are departing Georgia and have been enrolled in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (**STEP**), please do not forget to end your enrollment when you leave.

You can end your enrollment by visiting the <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/> if you previously enrolled through this site.

If you previously submitted a paper registration form at the U.S. Embassy Consular section in Tbilisi, you may unregister yourself by sending an email request to close your enrollment with the Embassy to: [askconsultbilisi@state.gov](mailto:askconsultbilisi@state.gov)



[www.ustraveldocs.com/](http://www.ustraveldocs.com/)

**Call Center t**

**Callers in Georgia:**

**(995 32) 2471 160**

**Callers in the United**

**States: 703-988-7103**

**Email: support-**

**georgia@ustraveldocs.com**

### PLEASE NOTE!!!

**ACS UNIT WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ASSIST WITH VISA INQUIRIES  
ALL VISA INQUIRIES SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE CALL CENTER**

## NEWS ABOUT U.S. VISAS

**As of August 30, 2012, the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi has implemented new visa application procedures.**

This new system is being implemented worldwide. The new process is easier, more convenient, and includes everything in one fee, making it less expensive than before. With only one payment (the current MRV fee based on the visa classification) the following services are now provided to all applicants:

- MRV fee collection at any branch of the designated bank
- Scheduling of visa appointments  
(through call center numbers or online appointment website)
- Providing information on general visa inquiries
- Passport pickup for approved visa applications

Online appointment website <http://www.ustraveldocs.com/>

### ***Financial Scam Warning***

The Consular Affairs Bureau receives daily calls about international scams involving Internet dating, inheritance, work permits, overpayment, and money-laundering. Many scams are initiated through the Internet; victims range in age from 18 to 81 and come from all socio-economic backgrounds.

For more information regarding International Financial Scam, please visit the Department of State's web-page:

[http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/financial\\_scams/financial\\_scams\\_3155.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/financial_scams/financial_scams_3155.html)

Please note that common scams include pen-pals, internet friends, romantic partners, and casual acquaintances claiming to be victims of crime, hospitalized, or preparing to come to meet the U.S. citizen, but need urgent financial assistance in order to resolve the situation. In many cases, the details are vague but accompanied by a request for financial support. Please forward your inquiries regarding the welfare or whereabouts of those in possible danger to our office. We may not share information about any U.S. citizen without their written consent, but we can try to contact someone to assess their safety and determine what assistance we could provide to them.

For further information you may refer to the United States Federal Bureau of Investigations Internet Criminal Complaint Center at: [www.ic3.gov](http://www.ic3.gov)

### ***FILING PETITIONS FOR RELATIVES***

Petitioners residing overseas who wish to file a Form I-130, Petition for Alien Relative, may do so as follows:

**If the petitioner resides in a country where USCIS does not have a public counter presence, such as in Georgia, the Form I-130 must be filed with the USCIS Chicago Lockbox at one of the addresses below, unless the petitioner requests and is granted an exception based on one of the criteria described below: USCIS Chicago Lockbox addresses for regular mail deliveries: USCIS P.O. Box 804625 Chicago, IL 60680-4107 . USCIS Chicago Lockbox address for express mail and courier deliveries: USCIS Attn: I-130 131 South Dearborn-3rd Floor Chicago, IL 60603-5517**

For additional information about how to file a Form I- 130 with the USCIS Chicago lockbox, please see the USCIS website at <http://www.uscis.gov/> or contact USCIS by phone at 1- 800-375-5283.



[www.americancorners.ge](http://www.americancorners.ge)

# AMERICAN CORNERS IN GEORGIA

AMERICAN CORNERS IS A JOINT PARTNERSHIP PROJECT THAT PROMOTES COOPERATION AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND GEORGIA BY PROVIDING ACCURATE INFORMATION ABOUT THE U.S. ACCESS TO AMERICAN CORNERS AND THEIR COLLECTIONS IS FREE AND OPEN TO ALL INTERESTED CITIZENS OF GEORGIA.

AMERICAN CORNERS FEATURE AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE COLLECTION OF AMERICAN FICTION AND REFERENCE BOOKS ON U.S. GOVERNMENT, HISTORY, CULTURE. CORNERS ALSO PROVIDE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT THE U.S. THROUGH SUPERVISED INTERNET ACCESS, AUDIO, AND AMERICAN FILMS AND DOCUMENTARIES. AMERICAN CORNERS SUPPORT LOCAL ENGLISH INSTRUCTIONS WITH AN EXTENSIVE COLLECTION OF ENGLISH TEACHING MATERIALS WHICH ARE FREQUENTLY USED BY LOCAL STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND U.S. PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS.

AMERICAN CORNERS ALSO OFFER AMERICAN SPEAKERS ON A VARIETY OF TOPICS AND HOST A RANGE OF CLASSES, CLUBS AND ACTIVITIES. AMERICAN SPEAKERS HAVE DISCUSSED TOPICS AS VARIED AS AMERICAN BASEBALL, THE U.S. CONSTITUTION, U.S. EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, HOLIDAY TRADITIONS, AND MORE. AMERICAN CORNERS SPONSOR CLUBS, SUCH AS AMERICAN MUSIC CLUBS, POETRY CLUBS, AND VIDEO CLUBS, WHICH ALLOW PEOPLE TO PRACTICE THEIR ENGLISH OR JUST LEARN MORE ABOUT AMERICAN CULTURE AND TRADITIONS.



AMERICAN CORNER TBILISI  
YOUTH PALACE #6 RUSTAVELI AVE  
TEL: (995 32) 293 54 66

AMERICAN CORNER TELAVI  
TELAVI CENTRAL LIBRARY  
#1 EREKLE II STREET  
TEL: (8 350) 27 32 96

AMERICAN CORNER KHASHURI  
KHASHURI CENTRAL LIBRARY  
#10 DZNELADZE'S STREET  
TEL: (8 368) 24 27 84

AMERICAN CORNER GORI  
GORI CENTRAL LIBRARY  
#8 STALIN STREET  
TEL.: (8 370) 27 49 15

AMERICAN CORNER BATUMI  
BATUMI STATE LIBRARY  
#21 VAZHA PSHAVELA STREET  
TEL: (8 422) 27 21 62

AMERICAN CORNER ZUGDIDI  
ZUGDIDI CENTRAL LIBRARY  
#58 MERAB KOSTAVA STREET  
TEL: (8 415) 25 07 30

AMERICAN CORNER RUSTAVI  
RUSTAVI CENTRAL LIBRARY  
#11 SHARTAVA STREET  
TEL: (8 341) 2 8 60 35

AMERICAN CORNER AKHALTSIKHE  
AKHALTSIKHE CENTRAL LIBRARY  
TEL: (8 365) 22 38 85

AMERICAN CORNER KUTAI  
KUTAI CENTRAL CHILDREN'S  
LIBRARY #2 DUMBADZE STREET  
TEL: (8431) 24 53 88

**Emergency-response center 112**

(Includes Patrol Police, Medical-Emergency Center, Fire and Rescue Services)

**Information Centre**

Tel: 118 09

**Airport Hotline**

Tel: +995 32 2310421; +995 32 2310341

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia**

Tel: (995 32) 2945000

**USEFUL**

**CONTACT**

**INFO**

**LIST OF DOCTORS**

**LIST OF ATTORNEYS**

**CIVIL REGISTRY AGENCY**

Issues residency permits, Georgian passports, civil documents, Apostille on Georgian documents.

**DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM**

Information on Tourism activities, entertainment, cultural events.

**E-map of Georgia**

No Doctors or Attorneys are affiliated with the U.S. Embassy and the lists are provided for informational purposes only.



**Important Security Announcement**

When visiting the Embassy, please remember not to bring mobile phones or any electronic devices (such as Blackberries, iPods, or PDAs), food/drinks, medicine or cosmetic products, as they are not allowed within the Embassy. We also strongly advise that you do not bring large bags, such as backpacks, suitcases or packages to the interview as there are no storage facilities on Embassy grounds.

**WE WELCOME YOUR IDEAS...**

The American Citizen Services Unit is constantly thinking of new ways to improve our service and efficiency.

**If you have an idea or a suggestion about how we can make your visit easier or about items or subjects you'd like to see covered in this newsletter or future public broadcasts please let us know by email: [askconsultbilisi@state.gov](mailto:askconsultbilisi@state.gov)**

To remove your name from our mailing list, please [click here](#)